

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (withdrawn): A mower deck comprising:

a top surface;

a cutting blade rotatably supported beneath the top surface;

at least one sidewall depending from the top surface to form a cutting chamber within which the blade rotates, said sidewall having a front portion and a rear portion, the rear portion having a lower perimeter extending substantially vertically downward from the top surface, the rear portion defining a discharge opening positioned between the top surface and at least a portion of the lower perimeter; and

an insert that is removably attached to the rear portion so as to block the discharge opening and enable the chamber to be selectively operated in a mulching mode by attaching the insert or in at least a partial discharge mode by removing the insert.

Claim 2 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the cutting chamber extends through a circumference of approximately 360 degrees and the discharge opening extends along about 60 to about 120 degrees when the insert is removed.

Claim 3 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the cutting chamber is circular, and the tips of the blade are substantially equidistant from the sidewall and the insert when the insert is positioned in the discharge opening.

Claim 4 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the discharge opening is located on a bottom section of the rear portion.

Claim 5 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the discharge opening is defined by the sidewall at the rear portion extending outwardly away from the blade.

Claim 6 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 5, wherein the sidewall extends outwardly and downwardly away from the blade.

Claim 7 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 5, wherein the sidewall extends outwardly so as to be substantially parallel with the blade.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the insert includes first and second ends and is removably attachable to the deck by holding the first end against the sidewall and by securing the second end with a fastener.

Claim 9 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the blade is a mulching blade.

Claim 10 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 1, wherein the blade, sidewall, discharge opening, insert and chamber are first such structures, and which includes a second blade, second sidewall, second opening, second insert and second chamber.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): The mower deck of claim 10, wherein the first and second blades are oriented to be rotated in opposite directions.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 10, wherein the first and second cutting chambers are staggered relative to a line running substantially parallel to a direction of travel of a lawnmower operating with the deck.

Claim 13 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 10, wherein the first and second openings are oriented to blow grass clippings in streams angled towards one another.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 10, wherein the first and second inserts are substantially left and right versions of a same structure.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 10, which includes a mulch ramp placed between the two chambers that directs grass cut at outer portions of the first and second blades towards inner portions thereof.

Claim 16 (withdrawn): The mower deck of Claim 10, which includes a one-piece insert used to block openings in both the first and second chambers.

Claim 17 (currently amended): A mower deck comprising:

a top surface;

a cutting blade rotatably supported beneath the top surface;

at least one sidewall depending from the top surface and forming a cutting chamber within which the blade rotates, the sidewall including a front portion and a rear portion, the rear portion: (a) having an interior surface ~~and an exterior surface, the interior surface~~ defining a portion of the cutting chamber; and (b) an outermost exterior surface having: (i) a wall that extends~~sing~~ substantially vertically downward from the top surface; and (eii) a material director defining a discharge opening; and

an insert attachable to the outermost exterior surface rear portion, the insert configured to block the discharge opening when the insert is attached to the outermost exterior surface; and

at least one fastener operable to attach the insert to the rear portion at outermost exterior surface adjacent to the discharge opening, wherein a portion of the fastener is positioned adjacent to the outermost exterior surface of the rear portion of the sidewall.

Claim 18 (currently amended): The mower deck of Claim 17, wherein the insert is coupled to the sidewall via a single fastener wherein the rear portion of the sidewall includes a guide member, the guide member operable with the fastener to maintain the position of the insert at the discharge opening when the insert is attached to the rear portion.

Claim 19 (original): The mower deck of Claim 17, which includes a mulch ramp positioned on an underside of the top surface, above the blade, the ramp operating to direct grass out at an outer portion of the blade towards an inner portion thereof.

Claim 20 (original): The mower deck of Claim 17, wherein the discharge opening is oriented with respect to a rotational direction of the cutting blade to be in-line with a direction of air and grass flow caused by the rotational direction.

Claim 21 (withdrawn): A lawnmower deck comprising:

a cutting chamber having a top surface and at least one sidewall, the top surface passing through an upper plane, the sidewall including a front portion and a rear portion, the rear portion extending substantially vertically downward from the top surface, the rear portion having a lower edge passing through a lower plane, the rear portion defining at least one discharge opening positioned between the upper plane and the lower plane;

a mulching blade rotatably connected to the chamber, the mulching blade disposed within the chamber;

a mulch ramp connected to the chamber, the mulch ramp disposed between the top surface of the chamber and the blade; and

an insert removably attachable to the rear portion, the insert positionable so as to cover the discharge opening.

Claim 22 (withdrawn): The lawnmower deck of Claim 21, wherein the ramp is disposed on a front half of the chamber with respect to a direction of travel of the chamber, and wherein the insert is positioned on a back half of the chamber.

Claim 23 (withdrawn): The lawnmower deck of Claim 21, wherein the insert blocks an opening in the chamber, the opening configured to encourage a direction of a flow of air and grass exiting through the opening.

Claim 24 (withdrawn): The lawnmower deck of Claim 23, wherein the discharge opening is configured and oriented to channel air and the material towards a centerline of a lawnmower carrying the chamber with respect to a direction of travel of the lawnmower.

Claim 25 (withdrawn): A method of manufacturing a mowing machine comprising the steps of:

providing a cutting chamber operable to trim on multiple side portions thereof, wherein the cutting chamber is convertible from a chamber that primarily mulches grass clippings to a chamber that primarily discharges grass clippings via a single action of opening an aperture in a rear portion of the chamber with respect to a direction of forward travel of the mowing machine.

Claim 26 (withdrawn): The method of Claim 25, wherein opening the aperture includes opening a separate aperture for each of a plurality of blades positioned in the cutting chamber.

Claim 27 (withdrawn): The method of Claim 25, wherein opening the aperture includes loosening a fastening device.

Claim 28 (withdrawn): The method of Claim 25, which includes sizing the aperture to reduce an amount of noise escaping the chamber.

Claim 29 (withdrawn): The method of Claim 25, which includes sizing the aperture to help to preclude rocks/particulate caught by a blade inside the chamber from exiting the chamber.

Claim 30 (withdrawn): The method of Claim 25, which includes orienting the aperture so that clippings are blown behind the lawnmower so that the clippings can be collected by a collector trailing the lawnmower.

Claim 31 (withdrawn): A mower deck portion comprising:
a top wall;

at least one side wall connected to the top wall, the side wall having a front portion, a rear portion and a plurality of side portions, the rear portion extending substantially vertically downward from the top wall, and the rear portion including a rear discharge wall having a lower edge, the rear discharge wall defining a rear discharge opening between the top wall and at least a portion of the lower edge;

a cutting chamber defined by the top wall and the side wall;
a discharge control device; and

at least one securing member which removably secures the discharge control device to the rear discharge wall, wherein a portion of the securing member has a position outside of the cutting chamber so as to facilitate installation and removal of the discharge control device.

Claim 32 (withdrawn): The mower deck portion of Claim 31, wherein the side portions of the side wall have an identical or substantially identical shape.

Claim 33 (withdrawn): The mower deck portion of Claim 31, wherein the cutting chamber is placed in a mulching mode when the discharge control device is secured to the rear discharge wall.

Claim 34 (withdrawn): The mower deck portion of Claim 31, wherein the cutting chamber is placed in a discharge mode when the discharge control device is removed from the rear discharge wall.

Claim 35 (withdrawn): A mowing machine operable in a mulching mode and a discharge mode, the mowing machine comprising:

a frame;
a plurality of wheels rotatably coupled to the frame;
a power unit supported by the frame;
at least one drive member operatively coupled to the power unit; and
a mower deck operatively coupled to the drive member, a portion of the mower deck having:
(a) a top wall;
(b) at least one side wall connected to the top wall, the side wall having a front portion, a rear portion and a plurality of side portions, the rear portion extending substantially vertically downward from the top wall, the rear portion including a rear discharge wall having a lower perimeter, the rear discharge wall defining a rear discharge opening between the top wall and a portion of the lower perimeter;
(c) a cutting chamber defined by the top wall and the side wall;
(d) a discharge control device; and
(e) at least one securing member which removably secures the discharge control device to the rear discharge wall, wherein a portion of the securing member has a position outside of the cutting chamber so as to facilitate installation and removal of the discharge control device.

Claim 36 (withdrawn): The mowing machine of Claim 35, wherein the side portions of the side wall have an identical or substantially identical shape.

Claim 37 (withdrawn): The mowing machine of Claim 35, wherein the cutting chamber is placed in a mulching mode when the discharge control device is secured to the rear discharge wall.

Claim 38 (withdrawn): The mowing machine of Claim 35, wherein the cutting chamber is placed in a discharge mode when the discharge control device is removed from the rear discharge wall.

Claim 39 (withdrawn): A mower deck comprising:
a top surface;
a cutting blade rotatably supported beneath the top surface;
at least one sidewall depending from the top surface to form a cutting chamber within which the blade rotates, said sidewall having a front portion and a rear portion; and
a discharge opening provided in the rear portion of the sidewall, the rear portion also including a member shaped and arranged to cooperate with grass and air momentum due to rotation of the blade to discharge clippings from the opening.